

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 587

By Matheny

A RESOLUTION to honor Frederick Douglass for his legacy of advancing and protecting civil rights.

WHEREAS, Frederick Douglass was born Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey near Easton, Maryland, in February of 1818, and lived the first twenty years of his life as a slave before escaping to freedom in 1838 through the Underground Railroad; and;

WHEREAS, with the assistance of abolitionists, he resettled in New Bedford, Massachusetts and changed his name to avoid recapture by fugitive slave bounty hunters; he thus began a new life as Frederick Douglass and worked tirelessly to help other slaves flee north through the Underground Railroad; and

WHEREAS, Frederick Douglass, who had no formal education and taught himself to read and write, would go on to become one of the Nation's leading abolitionists; his seminal autobiographical work, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, explained with unsurpassed eloquence and detail how slavery corrupts the human spirit and robs both master and slave of their freedom; and

WHEREAS, Frederick Douglass was not only prominent as an uncompromising abolitionist, but he also defended women's rights; and

WHEREAS, Frederick Douglass, through his writings, lectures, speeches, activism, and relationship with President Abraham Lincoln helped the Nation summon the will to accept civil war as the price to abolish slavery and emancipate millions from bondage; and

WHEREAS, Frederick Douglass was a strong advocate for African American service in the Civil War, arguing that since the war was being fought to end slavery, African Americans should be allowed to fight for their freedom and for that of all people; and

WHEREAS, he recruited soldiers for the first Army regiment of African-American soldiers, the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, and his son, Lewis, fought with the 54th at its most famous engagement, the Battle of Fort Wagner; and

WHEREAS, soon after the Civil War officially ended, Frederick Douglass had achieved both national and worldwide respect as an author, lecturer, organizer, thinker, and defender of human rights; and

WHEREAS, in 1872, the Equal Rights Party nominated Frederick Douglass as the first African-American candidate for Vice President of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, in 1874, Frederick Douglass was named president of the Congressionally chartered Freedman's Bank; and

WHEREAS, Frederick Douglass further served our nation as United States Marshal for the District of Columbia, United States Minister and Consul General to Haiti, and charge d'affaires to the Dominican Republic; and

WHEREAS, Frederick Douglass, who died February 20, 1895, earned worldwide recognition for escaping and dismantling the slave system and envisioning full citizenship and constitutional rights for all Americans; and

WHEREAS, Frederick Douglass devoted his life to the struggle for freedom, human dignity, and the full measure of civil and human rights for all men and women, famously observing that "Where there is no struggle, there is no progress; power concedes nothing without demand. It never has and never will."; and

WHEREAS, today, the Frederick Douglass Family Foundation preserves the legacy of Frederick Douglass by continuing his struggle for freedom and human dignity for all persons and seeking to abolish all forms of modern-day slavery and trafficking in persons; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor Frederick Douglass for his legacy of advancing and

protecting civil rights by working to end slavery in this country, recognizing this exemplary citizen as one of the leading architects that helped build modern-day America.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.